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## Some Aspects of Oral Reading in Primary Grades

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**A**LMOST all new movements in human progress display to some extent a destructive tendency. They attempt to establish themselves more rapidly and surely by stressing the defects and weaknesses of current belief and practice. Quite commonly it is made to appear that there is something essentially antagonistic between the old and the new. This may be true, but it has frequently happened that things of value have been cast out altogether or unduly neglected which should have been reinterpreted in the light of new discoveries and preserved in better form. Even where the advocates of a new movement have no desire to bring about a complete substitution, there is apt to be an extreme emphasis on the new theory or discovery while it is getting a foothold. During this period things which are not really opposed to each other are often made to appear so.

The field of education furnishes many examples of this sort of wasteful confusion. One of the latest is the false antagonism that has grown up in many minds regarding the respective merits of oral and silent reading. Two processes which have many elements in common but which should be used for different purposes have been compared as if they were almost totally different in nature. Either process, or both, might suffer under such a

false conception but the fact seems to be that today oral reading, the older of the two in educational practice, is often the subject of disparagement and neglect if not of actual condemnation.

Probably there is no other feature of elementary education which has been so thoroughly studied as that of reading. The critical and constructive movement has been short, as educational movements go, and very intensive. It has employed many agencies of searching investigation and experiment, with the result that numerous facts have been discovered and many well-based opinions have been formed regarding teaching, learning, and using the art of reading.

The leaders in this movement have never set in opposition the nature and purposes of oral and silent reading. On the contrary, Gray, Judd, Gates, Zirbes, and other investigators of reputation have frequently pointed out certain pertinent facts which, if given due weight, would check the present marked tendency to emphasize silent reading to the detriment of oral.

For one thing, the two processes are not so unlike as many teaching methods seem to imply. Until late in the third grade the habits of children in oral and silent reading show little difference as regards rate, rhythm of

eye-movement, frequency and duration of fixation pause, regressive movements, etc. Except for a greater exercise of speech organs and a different breath control, immature readers employ practically the same physical processes in both; and if not made self-conscious or forced to give undue attention to "expression" the mental processes seem to be much the same. Normally the rate of eye movement exceeds somewhat the rate of articulation about the beginning of the fourth grade, and until that stage is reached any proper exercise of the art of reading, oral or silent, should contribute materially to growth in either kind.

As a means of increasing speed and fluency in reading, many careful observers believe that entirely too much confidence has been placed in silent reading exercises. The dawdling habits encouraged by oral reading have been pointed out very frequently. But are we giving sufficient attention to the opportunities for fleeting attention and disjointed responses which characterize much of the silent reading of the sort that calls for matching, checking, underlining, coloring, pasting, etc.? Such exercises very commonly involve the actual reading of not more than fifteen or twenty words in as many minutes. As to eye-movements, no one knows what the reader's eye has done in such an activity. It may have focused in a random manner all over the page. Even when a group is supervised during such exercises there is ample opportunity for random, partial, and uncoordinated activity. It would be a very undiscerning person who could believe that an immature reader left to himself at a stage where he needs such exercise, employs eye-movements and other reactions well calculated to build up desirable and efficient habits. It is highly probable that well-planned, expertly conducted oral reading for the same period of time would have a more favorable effect on fundamental features of silent reading habits than have many of these especially designed silent-reading exercises.

Much doubt has been cast on oral reading as a means of developing fuller comprehension. It is argued that an appropriate act

such as running, walking, pointing, or answering printed questions in various overt ways insures clear understanding far more than does oral reading of a passage. It will be readily admitted that the mere calling of words even with a fair degree of expression is no test of comprehension. It is quite possible for even a mature reader to read aloud an entire page in a manner to arouse no question in the minds of listeners as to the degree of his awareness, and yet finish with an extremely meager idea of what he has read. But when children are permitted and tacitly encouraged to read in this way, it simply proves that teaching is on a low plane; it does not prove that oral reading *per se* is an ineffective means of training in intelligent and thoughtful reading.

The fact that oral reading as a teaching method has been misused and used to excess in the past, ought not to obscure its genuine interest and practical service to children. Silent reading also is being misused today, and there is little doubt that it is being used to excess in the lower grades. Silent reading seems to be "unnatural" to the younger children. They are vocal on all possible occasions and are at the stage where the only kind of communication they know is of an audible sort. All activity is more enjoyed if shared and they want to talk about every experience. At this period children like to show that they can read, by reading aloud to some one—almost anyone who will listen—parent, teacher, visitor, or another child. For a similar reason stories told to children by a good story-teller give a kind of delight seldom equalled when read to them, because there is established a more direct and enlivening current of feeling and thought. From such vivid social experiences to silent reading by the child alone, with the printed page as the only medium of communication, represents a long road of progress, intellectual and emotional. We make a mistake when we try to shorten the process unduly by plunging children at once and almost exclusively into the cold isolation of silent reading.

While it is possible to isolate completely the act of silent reading from oral reading (if we exclude the uncertain factor of suppressed articulation) it is not possible to exclude entirely the act of silent reading which accompanies or outruns the oral process. At least this is true after some facility has been attained, when the eye-voice-span is such that partial recognition in the fringe of vision keeps ahead of articulation. Therefore, good practice in oral reading facilitates to some extent silent reading. Also, in the earlier stages of learning to read children are taught to glance ahead and get the thought of a sentence before attempting to read aloud.

While there are these common elements in the two processes each has its own specific features and values which should not be neglected or confused. The values of silent reading are not likely to be overlooked at present, but oral reading stands in need of expert attention. There is perhaps as much room for enlargement of our concept of its place in life, and improvement in prevailing techniques of teaching it, as there was twenty years ago in regard to silent reading.

It cannot be denied that adult life calls for far more silent than oral reading, and this fact when considered singly and from the functional view point of education seems to dictate a like proportion during elementary school years. But there are other considerations which deserve attention. Perhaps the many and varied activities of a socially organized school change greatly the relative importance of these two types of reading. If groups of children are engaged in many pursuits, if they are investigating, studying, and sharing the results of their efforts, if they are creating and selecting literary and informational materials, if they are learning to make use of the critical opinions of others, it follows, does it not, that their reading procedures will be quite different from those of the tired business man in his easy chair, or of the college professor in his study. A good deal of oral reading is certain to be needed and enjoyed in such a school.

Another consideration is the possibility that the school might encourage and render more delightful the neglected custom of reading aloud in the home. Older children do read aloud to younger ones for entertainment, perhaps more than we realize. Many mothers and other adult members of a family read to the children. While some adults cannot endure being read to and never indulge in oral reading themselves, there are others who greatly enjoy listening to a good reader, and a smaller number may be discovered in any social group who are capable of giving pleasure in this way.

All of the other arts are receiving an increasing amount of attention from specialists and classroom teachers and are undergoing reorganization as modes of expression for children. New and inspiring movements are easily discernable in our public schools whereby rapid changes are being made in the objectives, the content, and the techniques of teaching the expressive arts—music (vocal and instrumental), drawing, painting, designing, dramatic expression, dancing, and creative writing. The selection and appreciation of literature and its interpretation through oral reading is another of the expressive arts. So regarded we cannot afford to neglect it at any stage in the elementary school or set it aside as merely an inferior method of training in the techniques of reading.

Children learn to sing with a fine tone and expression and with evident enjoyment Milne's "The Three Little Foxes," Stevenson's "The Swing," Rosetti's "Who Has Seen the Wind," and Fyleman's "There Are Fairies at the Bottom of Our Garden." They should be able also to read such poems with a pleasing voice and the natural expression which comes from real appreciation. They are being trained to read silently, to answer printed questions, and give reports on *ALICE IN WONDERLAND*, *FLOATING ISLAND*, *DR. DOLITTLE*, and *HETTY*. No book report or other school device equals a successful audience reading of some of the choicest parts of such stories. Reading of this sort gives evidence as nothing else does of

# Use of Diagnostic Tests in Teaching Silent Reading

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THE most important change of recent years in classroom instruction is the enrichment of the course of study and of the opportunities offered to children. Instead of a few textbooks relating to a limited number of topics, the progressive school today provides wide reading opportunities in many fields. Furthermore, the solution of most classroom problems requires the skillful use of books and sources of information. The library "is the place where the children bring the experiences, the problems, the questions, the particular facts which they have found and discuss them so that new light may be thrown upon them, particularly new light from the experiences of others."<sup>1</sup>

These tendencies have resulted in establishing a very close relationship between reading and practically every school activity. As a special subject of instruction, reading is intimately related to children's daily experiences and language activities and should be taught in connection with all of them. As a means of gaining information and pleasure, it is essential in every content subject, such as history, geography, science, and literature. In fact, rapid progress in these subjects depends to a large degree on the ability of pupils to read independently and intelligently. It follows that good teaching must provide for the improvement and refinement of the reading attitudes, habits, and skills that are needed in all school activities involving reading.

One of the noteworthy developments of the last decade is a keener appreciation of the importance of intelligent reading in social life. Investigations show<sup>2</sup> that it is an indis-

pensable means of "familiarizing adults with current events, with significant social issues, with community and national problems, and with American institutions, ideals and aspirations." It is essential also in attaining vocational efficiency, in broadening one's range of general information, and in seeking pleasure and profit during leisure hours.

The results of the few available studies<sup>3</sup> of uses of reading suggest that reading activities may be conveniently grouped into two types, depending more on the purpose of the reader than on the subject-matter. These are work-type and recreational reading.

The work type of reading, the concern of this discussion, is associated with the demands of our vocations, civic duties, and other phases of daily life. Such reading, it should be noted, is directed most often by relatively conscious and practical purposes. Thus, "adults turn to professional, trade, or home-making journals to discover new and important items of information. Most people read news items, advertisements, editorials, and notices purposefully, to direct action, to study current problems, and, if possible, to arrive at principles of conduct in civic and personal matters."<sup>4</sup>

The same sort of reading is no less common among children. Boys read and follow directions in the SCOUT MANUAL and books on radio, and girls read similarly about camp craft, cooking, and sewing. Moreover, since schools are organized, in large part, for definite increase of knowledge, a great deal of the reading assigned there belongs primarily to the work type. Most lessons in civics and history, geography and other

<sup>1</sup> Dewey, John—*SCHOOL AND SOCIETY*. University of Chicago Press, 1900.

<sup>2</sup> Gray, W. S.—"Importance of Intelligent Silent Reading", *ELEMENTARY SCHOOL JOURNAL*, XXIV (January, 1924), pp. 348-356.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Iowa Reading Examinations—UNIVERSITY OF IOWA STUDIES IN EDUCATION. Volume IV, No. 3.

sciences, mathematics, and language require this kind of reading.

Horn and McBroom<sup>5</sup> have listed the typical situations in which we read silently as follows:

1. To inform one's self on a problem to be solved; e. g., what are the best connections between here and San Antonio, Texas?
2. To verify a fact or an opinion; e. g., was this word used right?
3. To be able to act on what one reads; directions, advertisements, etc., such as how to play a game, how to make a cake; railroad schedules, etc.
4. To be able to form a basis for judgment; e. g., is this the best investment I can make?
5. To gather material to use in a piece of work to be done; e. g., a report to the club, an article to be written, etc.
6. To understand a situation, e. g., what is the cause of the trouble in Oklahoma?
7. To find out whether material bears on a certain subject; e. g., does this article have anything in it about what my child should eat?
8. To evaluate material; e. g., will these lessons do for our program for club study this year?
9. To increase general knowledge and information; e. g., what is the status of affairs in the Ruhr?
10. To stimulate one to new problems; e. g., what are other men in my business finding out about handling trade?

The necessity for a high level of reading ability on the part of pupils beyond the primary grades is more readily realized when it is recognized that the vast bulk of facts they are expected to master is obtained from books, or at least as a result of reading. A great deal of evidence<sup>6</sup> is available revealing the general low level of reading ability on the part of those who are most in need of highly developed reading skill. More important from the point of view of the teacher's

<sup>5</sup> Horn, Ernest and McBroom, Maude—"A Survey of a Course of Study in Reading" UNIVERSITY OF IOWA EXTENSION BULLETIN—No. 93, College of Education Series, No. 3.

problem of improving the quality of reading instruction, is the significant fact that reading efficiency<sup>7</sup> can be greatly improved in a relatively short time with the use of diagnostic procedures followed by systematic remedial teaching.

Because of the great importance of reading, schools must face the responsibility of making pupils effective readers. This task is difficult for the following reasons:

1. The individual differences among pupils
2. Inadequate isolation of the specific skills and abilities which make up the "whole" act of reading
3. The lack of adequate diagnostic instruments for revealing the failure of pupils to master such abilities as have been isolated
4. The failure of teachers generally to recognize the value of well planned remedial teaching to aid pupils in overcoming such weaknesses as are revealed by diagnostic procedures.

The more carefully the processes of education are analyzed and made clear the more the fact appears that individual differences are unavoidable. These differences are enormously complex and make difficult the teacher's task of meeting the varying needs and abilities of her pupils. Teachers, generally, are becoming conscious that the teaching of reading beyond the primary grades is largely remedial teaching.

Teachers are, therefore, in need of adequate diagnostic devices to aid them in planning for effective remedial teaching. They are unable to secure all the information needed from group tests measuring only general reading ability. The use of diagnostic procedures for revealing individual strengths and weaknesses is, therefore, to be identified with good teaching practice.

Before much progress can be made in reading diagnosis, specific reading skills must be isolated and thoroughly understood by classroom teachers. Among the few attempts to

<sup>6</sup> Book, W. J.—"How Well College Students Can Read". SCHOOL AND SOCIETY, Volume XXVI (August 20, 1927), pp. 242-248.

<sup>7</sup> O'Brien, J. A.—READING—ITS PSYCHOLOGY AND PEDAGOGY. The Century Company, New York City, 1926.

isolate the specific skills of silent reading is that made by Horn and McBroom<sup>8</sup>. They list the skills, knowledges, attitudes and abilities involved in the work-study type of reading as follows:

1. Skill in recognizing new words
2. Ability to locate material quickly
  - a. Knowledge of and ability to use an index
  - b. Ability to use a table of contents
  - c. Ability to use the dictionary
  - d. Ability to use library card files
  - e. Ability to use reference material
  - f. Ability to use keys, tables, graphs, etc.
  - g. Ability to skim
3. Ability to comprehend quickly what is read
  - a. Rhythmic and rapid eye movements
  - b. Absence of lip reading
  - c. Knowledge of meaning
4. Ability to select and evaluate material needed
5. Ability to organize what is read
  - a. To summarize
  - b. To assign topics to proper order or place
  - c. To discover related material
  - d. To outline
6. Remembrance of material read
7. Knowledge of sources
8. Attitude of attacking reading with vigor
9. Attitude of proper care of books

One of the most complete inventories<sup>9</sup> of skills, knowledges, attitudes and abilities in work-type reading is found in a bulletin published by the Minneapolis Board of Education.

The principal value of such lists and inventories referred to resides in concentrating attention of teachers upon the large number of "specifics" and the necessity of taking account of them to assure pupil efficiency in the complex act of reading. They also aid the test builder in providing important facts necessary for the development of effective

8 Horn, Ernest and McBroom, Maude—op. cit.

9 MINNEAPOLIS BULLETIN, NO. 12—The Techniques and Evolution of a Supervisory Program in Work Reading.

tests, which will reveal to teacher and pupil where additional emphasis in reading drill is needed.

A study of the Horn-McBroom list and particularly the Minneapolis list impresses one with the complexity of the reading activity. Teachers must provide such instruction as will develop these different skills in pupils of varying abilities and interests.

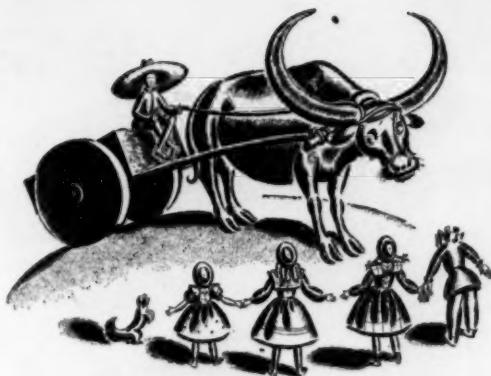
Careful diagnosis must precede an intelligent plan of teaching. "Three types of information may be secured through diagnosis: (1) Deficiencies in motor phases of reading may be fundamentally responsible for the child's failure to make satisfactory progress in reading; (2) detailed studies of the abilities of the pupil in the different specific reading skills may indicate the types of reading performance in which the pupil needs assistance; and (3) wide varieties of information concerning the child and his characteristics may throw light on the causes of reading deficiencies."<sup>10</sup>

Complete diagnosis of reading cannot be done by standard tests or by "teacher-made" objective tests. Many factors of eye behavior require elaborate and complicated laboratory equipment. By careful observation, however, the teacher may discover certain limitations of eye behavior and provide training for improvement.

Diagnosis to be extensive requires the complete study of individual pupils and involves the use of mental tests, reading tests, physical and social data. Teachers may not need to employ all the available diagnostic procedures at one time or for any one pupil. For the most part, in fact, the teacher's diagnostic technique will involve the use of available reading tests.

When the tests developed for the measurement of reading are examined, it is readily discovered that by far the greatest number do not even diagnose many of the skills, knowledges, abilities and attitudes listed by Horn and McBroom as shown above. Many tests measure fairly well general comprehension

10 Brueckner and Melby—DIAGNOSTIC AND REMEDIAL TEACHING, pp. 305. Houghton and Mifflin, 1931.



From *A Head for Happy*, by Helen Sewell.  
Illustrated by the author. McMillan.

FOR the teacher or the librarian interested in children's books, there has, for at least a score of years, extended from the main road the delightful bypath of the illustrated book. Here was a place to linger and to dream, and although the excursion was brief, it afforded refreshment and inspiration.

A teacher to whose class I talked recently on editions and illustrators remarked wistfully, "How wonderful it must be to work with such beautiful books all the time!" Small wonder that she felt the contrast between the books I had with me and the texts with which she was surrounded, but I hastened to explain that only a very small part of our time as librarians was spent in such pleasant pursuits.

Unfortunately in the press and insistence of each day's tasks and our American inheritance of "purposeful activity," we feel called upon to be apologetic for what seems like an almost personal indulgence. But are not teachers and librarians still the chief purveyors of the illustrated book? For obvious reasons, beautiful editions are still in the luxury class, and more often than not, the pictures which a child sees in the school room or the library are almost the only aesthetic note in an otherwise commonplace environment. Here is beauty and imagination

## Modern Trends in Book Illustration for Children

LESLEY NEWTON

Lakewood Public Library  
Lakewood, Ohio

of a real and tangible sort, which can be passed on to children, but only when it is given the impetus of our own personal enthusiasms. We must recognize that this intimate love and knowledge will never come through mere cursory examinations.

In this role of the medium between the artist and the child, we have, in the last few years, found ourselves not only with an embarrassment of riches, but with an occasional bewilderment as new and strange pictorial forms appear which threaten to upset our former ideas of finished and beautiful workmanship. We take to our hearts a new Rackham or a Leslie Brooke with

a glad sense of familiarity, but we look a bit askance at what departs from our original conception of a picture book for children. We wonder what it is in the new and bizarre effects that artists find so much to praise, and often say, "This may be of interest to adults but it will not appeal to children."

It is very difficult to judge the emotional and aesthetic reactions of children by our own. To an adult a picture has the power of suggestion and associations and is reminiscent of years of seeing and living. For a child it has an almost purely objective interest; it is the story telling quality which appeals; the aesthetic qualities of line, colour, and form are a matter of education and development. That



From *Muskox*, by M. A. Peary. Illustrated by Kurt Wiese. William Morrow

is of course the reason why the average child is so little discerning, why he may take an equal interest in good art and bad, and why, above all, the thing he sees the most of, is calculated to become the thing he likes best. But I often wonder if the child of today is not better equipped to enjoy modern art, so called, than we think. In the modern school room he is learning to express himself in terms of the new technique. I wonder, too, if we do not need to analyze our own adult viewpoint. The reaction dismissed with, "I do not understand modern art" is often the equivalent of, "I haven't taken the trouble to."

The first years of the 20th century have been marked by an extraordinary number of new movements in the art world, and it is not strange that some of these should be reflected in children's books. Book illustration has always lagged behind other art manifestations and we can be sure of being on fairly established ground.

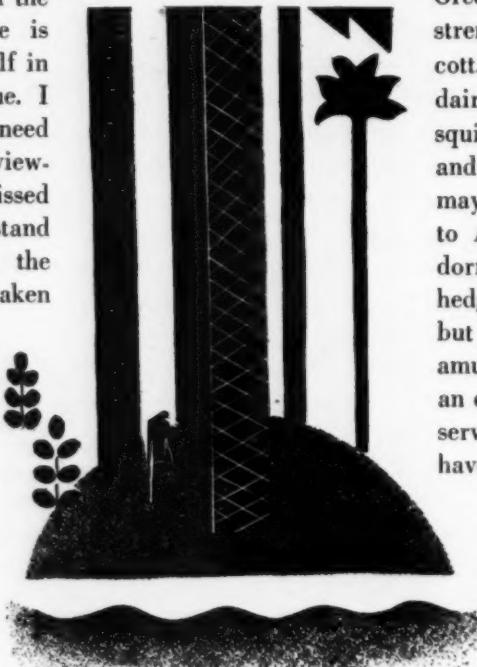
This does not mean at all that it is "off with the old and on with the new." There are many old favourites which are perennials and which deserve to be a part of every child's acquaintance. In any discussion of illustrators of children's books it is customary to begin with Walter Crane and Kate Greenaway. In his *TOY PICTURE BOOKS* Crane set a new fashion and gave an invaluable impetus to book illustration. But for all the beauty and skill of his workmanship, we have come at last reluctantly to acknowledge that he was the artist's artist rather than the child's. Perhaps, for very different reasons, Kate Greenaway should be thought of in a somewhat historic sense. If her prim delicate figures and scenes

call forth only a faint and, it must be admitted, a sometimes slightly derisive interest from the modern child, shall we not be content to wait for more mature eyes to recognize the beauty and charm of that other generation?

In direct antithesis to the femininity of Greenaway is the vigour and strength of Randolph Caldecott. His England too, of dairymaids, and rosy country squires, of hounds, horses, and pink-coated huntsmen, may be almost as unfamiliar to American children as the dormer windows and clipped hedges of Greenaway villages, but there is in Caldecott an amusing robustiousness and an enduring quality which deserves to be better known. I have long felt that a closer acquaintance with the roast beef and Yorkshire pudding qualities of his picture books would be an invaluable foundation for a later appreciation of British stories —a taste which often comes tardily enough

and has frequently to be forced even in college years.

And what of that deservedly famous triumvirate of Rackham, Dulac, and Nielson? Here is beauty of design, loveliness of colour, marvelous subtlety and inventiveness, qualities rich and full of romance. But have you ever had the experience of discussing these illustrators with boys and girls of even junior high school age and found them choosing Maxfield Parrish instead, or someone equally obvious? This means not only that we should unobtrusively redouble our efforts to help young people recognize the master hand, but also it might suggest to us that the qualities which so delight us in Rackham and Dulac are delicate and suggestive rather than forceful, detailed

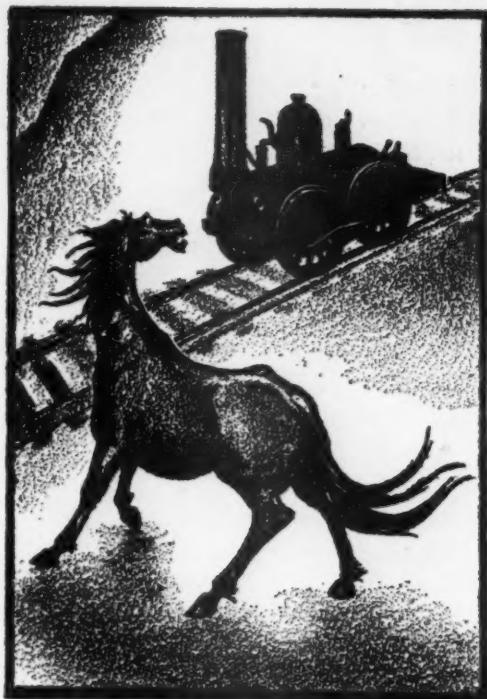


From *LITTLE BLACK STORIES*, by Blaise Cendraro. Illustrated by Pierre Pinsard. Brewer, Warren, and Putnam

and abstract rather than objective. Dorothy Lathrop might today be called the lineal descendant of these artists in the portrayal of fancy and beauty, and in the meticulous perfection and finish of her work. But mistake not, taste and an appreciation for her work is not common to the average child.

And now that we have ventured to criticize the old, how shall we build up a defence for the new? However paradoxical it may seem, probably the most striking reaction is in a present trend toward greater simplification, in a stripping of details and accessories, and a getting down to essentials. With economy of line has come a bolder, freer technique. A more lavish use of strong, vivid colours has to a certain extent taken the place of pastel refinements. The modern canvases of our museums show a decided reaction from realism and from the delineation of nature pure and simple. Rather does the artist attempt to give the emotional interpretation to the thing he sees. There is a strong emphasis upon the decorative quality and upon the design and composition as a whole. This feeling for rhythms and design and withal simplicity explains somewhat the return to archaic and primitive modes of expression—those of ancient Egypt, archaic Greece, primitive Africa and the art of the American Indian. This may often amount to a certain distortion, but we have learned that distortion may have its uses and its charm.

Cézanne, who is usually considered the creator of modern art as we think of it today, discovered in the impressionistic school under which he studied, the lack of solidity and of design, and his disapproval of this shortcoming has dominated much of the art of today. Form and space have given a new strength and vitality to modern painting and even young



From *LITTLE BLACKNOSE*, by H. H. Swift.  
Illustrated by Lynd Ward. Harcourt, Brace

children in school are striving for these effects by the use of various devices.

This is not the whole story by any means, nor does it mean that everything today is in opposition to what preceded it. It is an age of experimentation and never were we freer to take or leave what we will. But with certain tendencies in mind, we may better approach the work of some of our newer illustrators.



From *THE WONDER SMITH AND His Son*, by Ella Young. Illustrated by Boris Artzybasheff. Longmans, Green

Most of the modern movements in art have originated in France; some of our most striking and original book illustration comes from foreign picture books or from artists who have brought to their work a continental attitude. Now that it is so easy to obtain foreign books we shall not hesitate to cite certain of them.

The desire for simplification and for bolder, more direct effects has helped to bring about the present wide use of the block print and the woodcut. It is also, perhaps, in the nature of a reaction from accepted things, and reflects the effort of the artist in the midst of an almost too smooth and well ordered civilization, to get back to the directness of a more primitive expression. The massing of light and shade makes for striking and effective workmanship and adapts itself well to the possibilities and limitations of the book page.

The work of Rockwell Kent and Lynd Ward in this medium is outstanding. Lynd Ward's woodcuts for *THE WAIF MAID* by May McNeer are not only beautiful in themselves, but are particularly interpretative of the atmosphere and setting of the story. How unerringly do Rockwell Kent's drawings portray the beauty and strength of *MOBY DICK*! In *CALICO BUSH* by Rachel Field, the distinctly individual wood engravings by Allen Lewis have a direct and simple vigour which is remarkably in keeping with the spirit of the story.

Without a doubt there is a sombre quality about this art that limits its use, but for the interpretation of the humourous or fanciful, there are modifications which give some of the same simplicity and directness, but also admit of the lighter touch. Eric Berry works in the woodcut manner and has given us some splendid illustrations for African stories, notably in *FOLK TALES OF A SAVAGE* by Lobagola. In this connection we must not fail to mention a truly distinguished book—a translation of Blaise Cendrars' *LITTLE BLACK STORIES* with highly creative illustrations by Pierre Pinsard. Here is exactly the stark simplicity and primitive strength that the stories demand, a marvelous feeling for design, and above all, a dramatic quality which brings them within the comprehension of children not too young.

Kurt Wiese has used a combination of methods with interesting results—particularly in his animal drawings. Crayon work to which he adds colour in wash gives delightfully soft and suggestive qualities to *BAMBI* by Salten and to *KAROO THE KANGAROO* of

which Wiese himself is author. He also makes use of halation, a term taken over from photography and used by artists to describe that forcing of a contrast by the use of dark against a very light edge. In the pictures for *TOOKTOO* and for *MUSKOX* by Peary this method has produced soft furry contours as well as a sense of solidity. Eric Daglish's wood engravings of birds and animals show beautiful workmanship, although to the casual observer they may seem somewhat elaborated and without the appeal that a more literal coloured print might give.

Lynd Ward has experimented with various methods and has achieved a high degree of success in the art of simplification. *THE CAT WHO WENT TO HEAVEN* he has treated in the manner of Japanese brush work, which in its fine sense of economy is in direct contrast to the elaborations and intricacies of the Persian miniature which served as inspiration for earlier artists. In *LITTLE BLACKNOSE* by Swift he has scorned to fashion a realistic train or a literal countryside, but in his own fashion has created snorting horses and puffing engines which are highly convincing.

The black and white line drawing carries with it an almost inseparable connotation of humour, so admirably is its technique adapted to the temper of that element. Wanda Gág with her *MILLIONS OF CATS* and Peggy Bacon in her inimitable pen and ink drawings for *NEW SONGS FOR NEW VOICES*, as well as in the illustrations for her own stories, are two contemporary artists who use the same fluid line with something of the same effect. Wanda Gág works for more finished results and gives something of a homely peasant charm to her drawings, while Peggy Bacon's carefully careless drawings are American to the core, and full of faintly malicious thrusts at contemporary commonplaceness. James Daugherty is by many regarded as one of the outstanding figures in modern book illustration. Certainly he or the publishers have made a happy choice of texts and surely he has given to *KNICKERBOCKER HISTORY OF NEW YORK*, to *ABE LINCOLN GROWS UP*, and to Sandburg's

poems, illustrations with a robust vigor and a rollicking humour native to the American tradition. On the other hand his sinuous swirling lines when confined within the small compass of a book page have a tendency to become confused and overworked.

Of the the older American schools, Howard Pyle must always be remembered for his clever and careful work in black and white, particularly in *OTTO OF THE SILVER HAND*, in *ROBIN HOOD*, and in *PEPPER AND SALT*. When in his later work he abandoned this method and depended upon colour, he lost something of his individuality. He may have become more the popular illustrator but less the artist.

While we are still considering, by and large, the matter of simplicity and economy we might do well to turn to the work of Edy LeGrand, a French artist who has set the pace for a type of contemporary illustration of which he still remains the master. In his bold and striking illustrations for *VOYAGES ET GLORIEUSES DECOUVERTES* and for *MACAO ET COSMACE*, there is the utmost freedom and sweep, which is almost startling until we begin to discover the poetic and imaginative qualities which go with it. The profuse use of vivid colours adds to the exuberance of the whole effect.

In the art world, the French are undoubtedly in the advance guard, but thus far they have been little concerned with adapting their skills to the minds and sensibilities of children, and have produced little that is genuinely childlike. We must of course make always the exception of Boutet de Monvel's *JEANNE D'ARC* which has a secure and serene niche of its own. "Oncle Hansi" in *MON VILLAGE* and other books has fashioned quaint and appealing figures of Alsatian life but they are pleasantly realistic rather than imaginative. "Job," the illustrator of the late nineteenth century, when the Napoleonic myth was still in vogue, stands firm upon historic ground, and evokes something of the sense of pageantry in his coloured pictures of that era. The very literalness of his scenes has a certain appeal to children, but they are strangely

static and fail to stir us deeply. André Hellé, in the stylized figures of his *NOAH'S ARK* and *MARIONETTES* achieves a highly decorative effect with a minimum of parts and great economy of line. His animals are the wooden ones of a Noah's ark, but they are both amusing and genuinely characteristic.

To Germany we must give the credit for illustrations which are much more calculated to appeal to children. In the modern art movement, Germany has a very definite place, but it is an art more humanized and vital than that of France, and something of this is reflected in book illustrations. There is still popularity for the traditional German picture book with animated flowers and insects such as Sibylle Olfers gives us in *WHEN THE ROOT CHILDREN WAKE UP*, and for the delicate and meticulous flower pictures of Elsa Wenz-Vietor. A more modern note is struck in the poster-like pictures of Tom Seidmann-Freud. Elsa Eisgruber whose appealing figures for *SPIN TOP SPIN* have so much individuality, reveals a splendid draughtsmanship and a modern feeling for solidity of contour.

This consciousness of form which is in the pigtailed *mädchen* of Elsa Eisgruber has found its way into several recent picture books of this country, notably those of Helen Sewell—*A HEAD FOR HAPPY* and *A B C FOR EVERYDAY*. The element of design is evident in all her work but it does not interfere with the story telling quality, and while it may seem 'special' to us, it shows much originality. Akin to this is Zenya Gay's *SHIRE COLT* with its almost sculptured effects and with what many consider its too, too solid horses. However it seems to us admirably suited to the awkward strength and proportions of the English draught horse and to the wobbly and very coltish colt. The lithographic reproductions, the good type and the graphic excellence of the page make a satisfying whole.

In the *MAGIC RUG* by d'Aulaire, in which the pictures and story concern the adventures of an oriental rug in its native habitat, we can quite easily detect a method of which some use has been made in modern art experi-

mentation. In the effort to get back to the simplicity of children's first conceptions of picture making, there has been a conscious imitation of their untrained handiwork with its fine disregard for perspective or proportion. At first glance the adult eye may be offended at what seems to be a pseudo-childishness, a picturing of things not as children see them, but as they draw them because it is the only way they know. However unconvincing these results, there is in *MAGIC RUG* a certain freshness of approach, an oriental feeling for colour, and an element of fancy that save it from too carping criticism.

Probably what seems the most conscious and least childlike of modern trends is the emphasis upon pattern and design, and upon decorative effects. Applied to book illustration, it seems to introduce an element more mature and less interpretive and spontaneous. This does not so much apply to the composition as a whole as to those effects which are in a sense superimposed. It is of course elaboration of detail that has caused us to question Walter Crane as the ideal illustrator of picture books, which has made the delicately conceived and executed work of Pamela Bianco a delight to the artist's eye rather than to the child's, and which in turn has lured Dugald Stewart Walker and Willy Pogany into what occasionally approaches over-elaboration. This does not mean that we are decrying the work of these fine artists, but that we consider their art a more self conscious one and less within the understanding of the young child.

Several years ago Boris Artzybasheff was hailed with great acclaim for his illustrations for Mukerji's *GAY NECK, THE WONDER SMITH AND HIS SON* by Ella Young and several others. Here was indeed the creator of new patterns, the master of a bold, masculine technique which was arresting and forceful. This strong sense of pattern and design and a certain Slavic sternness of effect is occasionally lightened by drollery and humour, but on the whole his illustrations take their place among the highly individual and un-

usual manifestations in modern illustration. The art of Czecho-Slovakia and of Central Europe has in it a strong sense of pattern,



From *CALICO BUSH*, by Rachel Field.  
Illustrated by Allen Lewis. Macmillan

but there is predominating such a vigorous folk spirit and story telling quality, all decked in such riotous colours that we are less conscious of the plan or design.

What of some of the most popular illustrators of today—Elsa Beskow, Emma Brock, the Haders and the Petershams, René d'Harnoncourt, all of whom are doing such creditable work in the field of children's books? Here is indeed skillful simplicity, good draughtsmanship, vivacity and humour. They are accepted by children and understandable to all of us. We need now to enlarge our circle of affection and to develop a closer sympathy and understanding for the artist who is experimenting with newer forms.

Not infrequently a slight sense of irritation produces interest. Much of modern art will repay us for a loss of pictorial beauty by new vitality and interest in its sharper characterization, and in a certain excitement which is both provocative and stimulating.

# Fundamentals in Silent Reading\*

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THE purpose of this article is two-fold: first, to describe briefly the important steps involved in the act of reading in order that fundamental phases of silent reading may be distinguished; and second, to discuss three levels at which silent reading occurs in order to emphasize the importance of the higher mental processes in many reading and study activities.

Various steps are involved in intelligent reading. Eye-movement records show that in most reading activities the eye first fixates upon words or groups of words at more or less frequent intervals as it moves from left to right along the line. At each fixation, the retina receives visual impressions which set up nervous impulses that are transmitted to the visual centers of the brain. It is apparent that the visual impressions thus received must be accurate if right interpretations are to follow. The pupil, for example, who fails to distinguish between *when* and *where* as his eyes fixate upon the line will fail to transmit those impulses to the brain which will result in the recognition of the meaning involved.

As the eyes move along the lines a series of impressions are received by the retina, each of which results in a nervous impulse that is transmitted to the brain. It is essential that these impressions involve all essential parts of the printed line. A pupil, for example, who scrutinizes the line carelessly or whose eyes fixate at too distant intervals along the line fails to secure clear, accurate impressions of important words or phrases, and is therefore unable to recognize the entire meaning of the line or sentence read. On the other hand, the pupil who fixates upon each word,

and at times upon the different parts of words, fails to secure sufficiently comprehensive impressions to insure a rapid grasp of meaning. These statements indicate that the accuracy and span of the visual impressions received by the retina are very important in silent reading.

As the nerve impulses which are stimulated in the retina reach the visual centers of the brain, at least two types of associations may be aroused. The first relate to meaning and the second to pronunciation. The meaning associations which are aroused are of primary importance in this discussion. The extent to which a child or adult associates meanings with spoken or printed words is clearly a matter of experience. For example, a child who owns a pony, who takes care of it, and who has spent many delightful hours riding it, associates far more meaning with the word *pony* than one who has merely seen a pony on the street. Unless rich meaning associations are aroused one's interpretation of a passage will be meager or incomplete. Unfortunately, much of the material in textbooks today includes many words with which the pupils have made a few or no associations. It follows that very little meaning can be attached to such words as the impulses arising from the visual impressions of them reach the brain centers. A teacher plans wisely, therefore, who develops a wide background of relevant experience before pupils read, who clarifies the meaning of new words, and who constantly enriches the meaning of familiar words.

It is not sufficient, however, that appropriate meanings are aroused. Of even greater importance is the fact that they must be associated and interpreted. In this connection

\* Read before the Elementary Membership, National Council of Teachers of English, November, 1931.

wide use is made of the various mental processes which characterize good thinking. Studies made by Thorndike, for example, led him to conclude that the interpretation of the meaning of even simple passages "involves the same sort of organization and analytical action of ideas as occur in thinking of supposedly higher sorts".<sup>1</sup> Good interpretation of meaning, therefore, presupposes an active, inquiring mind. It involves the selection and association of ideas, comparisons of various types, the weighing of values, and the drawing of valid conclusions. A teacher plans wisely who raises relevant questions in the minds of pupils before they begin to read, who stimulates good thinking while pupils are in the act of reading, and who requires them to justify or support their interpretations.

A second type of association that may be aroused as impulses reach the visual centers of the brain relates to pronunciation. As a rule, the recognition of pronunciations is of minor importance in silent reading. There are at least two occasions, however, when they are of great value. The first is when the reader wishes to make use orally of the words included in a passage. Unless he can recognize the words quickly and accurately he is greatly handicapped. A second occasion for recognizing pronunciations is when the oral vocabulary of a young reader is greater than his reading vocabulary. The accurate recognition of pronunciations in such cases may be of distinct value in arousing appropriate meaning associations. These statements make it clear that ability to recognize pronunciations is essential even in silent reading. Without doubt, the development of habits of accurate pronunciation of words should keep pace with the increasing difficulty of the material read.

The rate at which meanings are associated with words is also a matter of great importance. As Judd has emphasized repeatedly, "the poor reader is one who is unable to pass

1. Thorndike, E. L. "Reading as Reasoning: A Study of Mistakes in Paragraph Reading," JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY, VIII (June, 1917), 331.

readily from the printed symbol to the meaning. For the poor reader the mere mechanical processes are obstacles and he loses time in trying to perform the preliminary mental acts which are necessary before he can comprehend the passage. In the case of the good reader, on the other hand, the mechanics of the process are very fluent and rapid. The proficient reader has mastered the words and moves on without hesitation to the meaning."<sup>2</sup> Such statements make it clear that accuracy and independence in recognizing the forms of words, a wide span of recognition, a large meaning vocabulary, and mental alertness are essential in fluent silent reading.

An additional fact of significance relates to the forms that meanings take in reading. Two general groups will be considered briefly. The first includes feeling reactions and bodily attitudes. For example, the word *snake* usually arouses a vivid feeling of recoil, the word *death* produces a feeling of despond, and the word *vacation* arouses a feeling of expectancy. Since the meanings of many words are closely associated with feeling reactions and bodily attitudes, it is obvious that interpretation will be most effective when printed words arouse the same vivid responses that the objects or life situations do which they represent. The second form which meanings take is the memory image. For example, when one recognizes the words *Niagara Falls* a mental picture or concrete image of the Falls is often recalled. Such images are of great value in our early experiences. As experience with an object or situation increases, the concrete image of it often gives way to a feeling reaction or bodily attitude, or to a verbal image. These statements indicate that meanings may take various forms such as concrete memory images, bodily attitudes, feeling reactions, and verbal images. Furthermore, the forms which meanings take vary among individuals and with the maturity and experience of a given reader. Of chief significance is the fact that a good reader connects with the words and sentences read the same feeling

2. Judd, Charles H. MEASURING THE WORK OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1916. p. 127.

reactions, bodily attitudes and memory images that attach to the objects or life situations to which they refer. A reader who does not respond in some one or more of these ways usually fails to associate vivid meanings with the words of a passage.

As meaning associations are aroused and as interpretation goes forward, nervous impulses may pass to the motor speech centers. This step is essential, of course, in oral reading. The number of such impulses varies with the pupil in silent reading. Not infrequently the impulses received by the motor speech centers are as numerous as in oral reading. This is true in the case of poor or immature readers. Among good readers, however, the impulses received by the motor speech centers are greatly reduced in number. As a result there are very few vocal responses. In fact, the process of vocalization may be reduced so much, that "a single unitary movement may correspond to a whole group of words, rather than to even the single word."<sup>3</sup> When vocal responses are reduced to this level they interfere very little, if at all, with fluent reading. In fact, some psychologists maintain that unitary responses may be of distinct aid in interpretation.

The discussion thus far has pointed out some of the essential steps or processes in silent reading. In the paragraphs that follow three types or levels of interpretation will be described and the implications of each with respect to teaching will be considered briefly. In the first type, the meaning of a passage is merely recognized in the form in which it is presented. For example, in reading to enjoy a story, to determine the author's organization, or to answer factual questions, one merely grasps the important meanings in their essential relations. Some of the mental processes involved are the recognition of the meaning of the various visual units, the association of these units together in right order and relationship, and the recognition of the relative importance of the ideas presented. Some of the problems involved in developing

good habits of interpretation at this level relate to the following: arousing keen interest, curiosity or a strong motive for reading; directing attention to the content; helping the pupil to anticipate the ideas in right sequence; and stimulating good habits of thinking while reading. It is essential that children learn early to interpret what they read at this level with a high degree of accuracy and fluency.

In the second type of interpretation, the reader must not only interpret the material read in the order in which it is presented, but he must also deal mentally with it. For example, in reading to find answers to judgment questions, to determine causal relationship, or to solve a thought-provoking problem, the reader must carry on a train of thinking in addition to that necessary in grasping essential meanings. The mental steps or processes involved differ with the purpose of reading. In reading to answer judgment questions, for example, one interprets the meaning of the passage in the form presented, selects the items which relate to the problem assigned, and then deals mentally with them until the answer has been derived. In reading to discover likenesses and differences between persons, places, situations, or events, one first interprets the essential elements of meaning in the order presented, selects the important facts with respect to each item under consideration, and then compares or contrasts them until significant likenesses and differences are discovered. The chief problem which teachers face in developing efficient habits at this level is to train pupils to engage in appropriate kinds of thinking while reading. To this end teachers should study carefully the obligations involved in each reading assignment, should exemplify appropriate steps to the members of her class, and should provide carefully directed practice until pupils attain a satisfactory level of proficiency. Training pupils to think effectively while reading for different purposes is one of the very urgent problems today in both elementary and secondary schools.

In a third type of reading pupils are re-

3. Judd, Charles H. *GENETIC PSYCHOLOGY FOR TEACHERS*, p. 245. New York. D. Appleton and Co. 1903.

quired to take steps which are not reading in any sense of the word but which are essential to the achievement of the purpose at hand. For example, when pupils are required to prepare an outline of the content of an assignment, or a brief, terse summary of important points, preliminary training in the techniques involved is essential. The procedure in either case differs with the character of the assignment. It is obvious, for example, that certain habits and skills involved in outlining are necessary when one reproduces in outline form the content and organization of a well-written chapter. Radically different steps are essential when the pupil is asked to prepare an outline based upon the content of several references relating to the same topic or problem. Teachers should study carefully the requirements of their assignments and give to pupils definite training in the specific study and recording techniques involved. Pupils

often encounter serious difficulty, not so much because they are unable to read as because they are not trained in the supplementary steps or techniques involved.

The foregoing discussion has emphasized the importance of various habits and processes involved in intelligent silent reading. Of unusual significance are an inquiring attitude of mind and the habit of good thinking while in the act of reading. Psychologists pointed out long ago that poor reading is due not so much to difficulty in getting visual impressions to the brain as to lack of interpretation after they reach the brain centers. Teachers should make every effort possible to insure rich meaning associations with words and clear interpretations of their implications. It is essential also that they train pupils to read intelligently for different purposes and develop the skills essential in worthwhile reading and study activities.

### SOME ASPECTS OF ORAL READING IN PRIMARY GRADES

(Continued from page 85)

sympathetic understanding and the real personal appropriation of the fun, the beauty, the emotional tone of the very choice literature now so abundant.

Children are capable of conceiving of literature as being in some respects like the

other arts, music and painting, and they may be led to take a real delight in identifying themselves with the characters and conveying to others through the art of oral reading, the ideas and emotions embodied in poem or story.

### MODERN TRENDS IN BOOK ILLUSTRATION FOR CHILDREN

(Continued from page 94)

#### BOOKS MENTIONED IN THIS ARTICLE

Untermeyer and Mannes—*NEW SONGS FOR NEW VOICES*; il. by Peggy Bacon. Harcourt  
 Boute de Monvel, L. M.—*JEANNE D'ARC*; il. by Boute de Monvel. Century  
 Cendrars, Blaise—*LITTLE BLACK STORIES*; trans. by Margery Bianco; il. by Pierre Pinsard. Brewer, Warren, and Putnam  
 Coatsworth, Elizabeth—*THE CAT WHO WENT TO HEAVEN*; il. by Lynd Ward. Macmillan  
 D'Aulaire, Edgar Parin and Ingri—*MAGIC RUG*; il. by the authors. Doubleday  
 Eisgruber, Elsa—*SPIN, TOP, SPIN*. Macmillan  
 Field, Rachel—*CALICO BUSH*; il. by Allen Lewis. Macmillan

Fish, H. D.—*WHEN THE ROOT CHILDREN WAKE UP*; il. by Sibylle Olfers. Stokes  
 Gag, Wanda—*MILLIONS OF CATS*; il. by Wanda Gag. Coward McCann  
 Gay, Zhenya and Jan—*SHIRE COLT*; il. by Zhenya Gay. Doubleday  
 Hansi—*MON VILLAGE*; il. by "Oncle Hansi." Flourey, Paris  
 Helle, Andre—*L'ARCHE DE NOE*; il. by Andre Helle. Garnier Freres, Paris  
 Lobagola, B. K. A.—*FOLK TALES OF A SAVAGE*; il. by Eric Berry. Knopf  
 Irving, Washington—*KNICKERBOCKER HISTORY OF NEW YORK*; il. by James Daugherty. Doubleday  
 Legrand, Edy—*VOYAGES ET GLORIEUSES DECOUVERTES*; il. by Edy Legrand. Tolmer, Paris, France

(Continued on page 110)

# Value of Reading Practice

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ALL OF us now teaching heard often in our youth the proverb, "Practice makes perfect." We have since learned, perhaps, that we may practice the wrong thing for years without learning our error. The proverb should therefore be stated as "Practice makes automatic." This we can subscribe to not only from our experience in learning but from all our teaching as well. "Practice makes automatic." We are used to this precept in arithmetic and in spelling. We are not so used to it in reading, but it is of more importance there than in any other school subject. "Practice makes automatic" is the leading maxim in the teaching of reading, especially of silent reading. Let us see how this may be.

Consider for a moment our experience in other fields. We all have many friends and acquaintances. We meet them on the street. Some we know if they are a block away, or if we merely glimpse them in a crowd, or if we see only their dim shapes in the dark of night. We have had much practice in seeing them; we have seen them hundreds of times; our recognition of them is automatic. Other acquaintances we know by sight, but we do not know them very well. We have to get a good look at them. We may even have to think a moment before we know who they are or what to call them. The trouble is that we have not seen them often enough. We have had little practice in recognizing them, and practice alone "makes automatic." The same thing is true in many fields, with many types of things. Some we recognize with "half a glance" because we have seen them so often. Some puzzle us and make us stop and consider, simply because we have had little practice at recognizing them. It is prac-

tice that makes automatic.

Consider then this same principle applied to silent reading. Before the child's eyes a steady file of words marches across and across the page. Page after page, the unending file continues. Dozens of words, scores of words, hundred of words. In the reading of a single page, one to two hundred or more march past. Does the child know each with "half a glance" or does he have to look at each one hard to recognize it? Practice makes automatic, but has there been this practice? Has he seen this word and that before? How often has he seen them before? How long ago was it that he saw them last? The endless file marches past before his eyes, but are the faces of the marchers new or old, familiar or unfamiliar?

Here we have the heart of the problem of equipping children for silent or independent reading. The children must not only *know* the appearance of the words; they must know their appearance *well*. How well? To answer this, let us look at certain facts which scientific experiment has demonstrated and which the teacher can verify for herself. Let the teacher some time use her watch to check on the children's speed of reading. Start a child at the top of a page and then glance quickly at the second hand of the watch. Mark down on a paper the second at which the reading begins. Then watch the second hand and at the same time keep glancing at the child to see if he is still reading on that page. As soon as he reaches the bottom of the page he will show it by turning his head to the page facing it or by starting to turn to the next page. The teacher will mark down the second at which the bottom of the page was reached. She can then go on with the reading lesson

and later come back to figure out how long, on the average, the child looked at every word on that page which was timed. In the third grade, some children may have read only 90 words per minute. This would mean that on the average they looked at each word two-thirds of a second. Some may have read 120 words per minute, which would mean they looked at each word about half a second. Is this knowing the words well enough, like old friends instead of mere acquaintances? Let the teacher herself answer this question by reading that same page and timing herself in the same way with the second hand of her watch. Let her read it as she would when just reading silently for the story. How long does she look at each word, on the average? She will find that she looks at each only a fourth of a second or less. The children know the words by sight and she knows the words by sight also, but she knows them very much better than the children do. The words are old friends of hers. She has known them for years, has seen them thousands and thousands of times. Practice has made her recognition of them automatic.

If practice does make automatic, what are the chances that children in school will get so well acquainted with the looks of words that recognition will be instantaneous, or at least be rapid enough for fluent, easy, interesting reading? That is, how much practice are the children given in the course of their reading? How often do words appear again and again in that file across the page?

Here some figures covering the repetition of words in school readers are enlightening. We can present only those for some first readers, but these are representative of books for later years. We show in Table I the amount of word repetition in five first readers with dates of publication ranging from 1913 to 1929. A striking progression appears. The first two books are strikingly similar, though by different authors and publishers, and represent the practice of the earlier time when no attention was paid to word repetition. Note that in these two books 43 words out of

every hundred were used only once or twice, giving little chance indeed for the children to get so familiar with their appearance as to recognize them at "half a glance." The third book on the table, published about ten years ago, shows fewer words used once or twice only, and a great number used over 10 times. The fourth book progresses in the same direction, and the fifth continues the change. A first reader now in preparation has no word in it used less than five times, and a great percentage used over ten times. This means in ten years an enormous advance in the endeavor to give in school readers the practice that makes automatic. That practice alone will cut down the half-second glance of the slow reader to the fourth-second glance of the fast reader and it will inevitably bring about silent reading and all the education that follows from the perusal of many books.

TABLE I  
REPETITION OF WORDS IN FIRST READERS.

Percentages of different words in five First Readers (published in years stated) used with the frequencies specified. (Inflected forms combined)

Frequency.	First Readers.				
	A 1913	B 1918	C 1921	D 1925	E 1929
1 or 2 times	43	43	33	21	18
3 to 5 times	18	20	24	25	27
6 to 10 times	13	15	14	22	22
11 or more times	26	22	29	32	33

It is true that children get some practice in rapid recognition by re-reading selections, but this practice must be much discounted because of the effect of memory. Children's stories are simple and easily remembered. The second time over, the children do not need to pay much attention to the individual words, the third time, less. It is meeting words in new context that gives skill in recognition, and it is this kind of practice that makes recognition automatic.

Still another aspect of practice in recognition needs to be thought of. When the children leave one book and start another, how many of the old friends of the one book will be met again in the next one? Surely after

dozens or scores of words have become so familiar that they require only the fractional glance of the skilled reader, this valuable word knowledge should not be lost by disuse. Surely this practice should not be thrown away by the failure of these words to re-appear in the reading matter again. What situation does the teacher find here?

Certain recent series of readers repeat in one book the words used in previous books. That is, a few have gone so far as to repeat in the first reader most of the words of the primer. None have gone so far as to use in the second reader all the primer and first reader words. This piling up of word-experiences, or meeting of old friends, as we have called it, should be continued until the commonest words are so well known that rather general free reading is possible. Then the old friends will recur in all sorts of reading, and the school book can turn attention elsewhere.

When the child changes from one reader series to another, what about practice for automatic word recognition? A most interesting contribution along this line was recently reported.<sup>1</sup> It deals with primers only, but the same method can be used with readers at any level. It should certainly be applied by school systems which seriously plan to use several sets of readers. In this case fifteen primers were analyzed for vocabulary, and these vocabularies were then compared. Of the results, the author states "The total word content of the fifteen books is 77,004 words, but only 1,260 different words occur. Of this number, 124 words occur only once, and 538 words occur in only one of these books. Perhaps the most surprising fact is that only 34 words are common to all books." Note that almost one-tenth of the words occur but once in fifteen books, and that almost half the different words occur in only one book out of the fifteen. A table is given in connection with this study showing the percentage of each book's vocabulary that occurs in each of the other books. These percentages range

from 24% to 68%, with most about 50%. These figures do not suggest that change from one series to a new one will bring back all the old friends, or words already known. Under the circumstances, the best a teacher can do is to choose books in sequence in such a way that the percentage of vocabulary duplication will be as great as possible.

Unfortunately, we have not until recently had any very satisfactory knowledge of what the commonest words of the language, known to children, are. But in 1928 appeared the Kindergarten Union List<sup>2</sup> which gives us 1759 words (dictionary basis) most generally known to thousands of pre-school children. This list does not include all the words commonly known to children but these 1759 are surely known to them. Now if the reading books could concentrate on some minimal vocabulary such as this, they could give the children real practice in word recognition. Then the reading of a half-dozen different series would not give our pupils only a doubtful and uncertain acquaintance with the looks of a long list of words, most of which appeared in only one book out of the half dozen. Instead there would result a sure, quick recognition of the most serviceable vocabulary. It must be understood, of course, that we mean that the different readers should overlap in *vocabulary*, not repeat selections.

Rapid, easy, silent reading is the goal because only by such reading can the children profit as they should from contact with the world of books. Rapid word recognition is the basic requirement for rapid reading. Only much practice in recognizing words will speed up word recognition. To secure that practice for the children, teachers should use readers that have high word repetition in each book and that carry the vocabulary of one book of a series into the next. Likewise, in using several series, they should find out which sequence will by overlapping of vocabulary, give the greatest amount of practice in word recognition.

<sup>1</sup> Sydney Harring. "What Primer Shall I Use Next?" ELEMENTARY SCHOOL JOURNAL XXXII, No. 3, Nov., 1931. P. 207

<sup>2</sup> A STUDY OF THE VOCABULARY OF CHILDREN BEFORE ENTERING THE FIRST GRADE. Child Study Committee of the International Kindergarten Union, 1201 16th St., Washington, D. C.

# Techniques for Testing Word Meaning Knowledge

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THE SEARCH for techniques which will adequately measure comprehension in reading has assumed a place of prominence among experimental projects in education during the past twenty years. Since a multiplicity of skills are involved in reading, varying all the way from that of grasping the central idea in a paragraph to the recognition and attachment of meaning to a single word, the adequate measurement of comprehension necessitates a variety of attacks. This article presents a discussion of some of the difficulties connected with the measurement of word meaning and the merits of various tests which have been used.

Very little is known at the present time concerning the words which have meaning to children at the various age or grade levels, even though it is a problem of importance in the fields of reading, spelling, oral and written language. The best technique of measurement is probably conditioned by the type of word meaning which is being measured. It is difficult to determine just what is meant by "knowing the meaning of a word." Various degrees of meaning are manifested. The word may be known with an absolute certainty, with reasonable clarity, or the meaning may appear vague and even doubtful. The context of the reading matter in some instances will suggest the meaning of the word, although the word itself was hitherto not in the individual's vocabulary. A word may be a symbol that can be put to some use in thinking or communication, or it may represent the total fullness of meaning which human experience may associate with it. Between these two extremes there are all degrees of meaning for different individuals. Then, too, many of our words have two or more

meanings, and, as a consequence, it is difficult to determine the most commonly used or basic meaning. The meaning adults attach to the word may not be the same as that common to children; or a word may connote different ideas to different individuals.

The development of methods of measurement of word meaning has paralleled the development of testing in other fields so that at the present time there exists a wide variety of procedures which have been used with some measure of success. In an analysis of standardized vocabulary and reading tests, twenty-six different devices for measuring word meanings were discovered. In some cases the differences were only slight, but were of such a nature that pupil performance might be affected. All of the available techniques have been classified and grouped in the following outline which is a modification of an outline originally presented by Dolch: (3)\*

## TECHNIQUES FOR TESTING KNOWLEDGE OF WORDS

1. Unaided recall (group or individual testing)
  - a. Checking for familiarity
  - b. Using words in a sentence
  - c. Explaining the meaning and defining
  - d. Giving a synonym
  - e. Giving an opposite
2. Aided recall
  - a. Recall aided by recognition
    - 1) matching test
    - 2) classification test
    - 3) multiple choice test
      - a) choosing the opposite
      - b) choosing the best synonym

\* Numbers refer to titles in bibliography at end of this article.

- c) choosing the best definition
- d) choosing the best use in sentences
- 4) same—opposite test
- 5) same—opposite—neither test
- 6) same—different test
- b. Recall aided by association
  - 1) completion test
  - 2) analogy test
- c. Recall aided by recognition and association
  - 1) multiple choice completion test
  - 2) multiple choice substitution test

By "unaided recall" is meant the presentation of a word alone or in a list so that the subject receives no clue from the context which will give the meaning of the word. Performance in this type of test is difficult, for it involves a knowledge of the word independent of the context. Aided recall tests are of the nature suggested by the name. Each word is presented to the subject in conjunction with other words which may help in giving meaning to the stimulus word. The simplest aid is by recognition in which the subject demonstrates his knowledge of the word by picking out the correct meaning from two or more possible meanings.

The checking test was first suggested by Kirkpatrick (5) as a possible means of approximating the size of an individual's "understanding vocabulary." Whipple (11) and others have shown that this method is somewhat inaccurate, in that it leads to the over-estimation of the vocabulary possessed by an individual. Dolch (3) claims that it is a valuable test technique, if care is taken to instruct the pupils not to see how many words they know, but to indicate the hard ones by pointing out the words already known. In an experimental study Simms (7) compares the checking test with the matching, multiple response, and identification tests. He concludes that the checking test is lacking in validity. As a device for measuring word meanings the checking test seems to have at least two inherent weaknesses: first, pupils may think they know the meaning of the stimulus word, but have it confused with an-

other word, and, second, pupils may report that they know the meaning of a word when they do not know it at all.

Using words in a sentence to show the meaning was the procedure followed by Brandenburg (2), in an attempt to estimate the vocabulary of children. He pointed out that in certain exercises it was difficult to determine from the sentence whether or not the pupil knew the meaning of the word. Explaining the meaning and defining a word is one of the most commonly used procedures for testing in the field of word meaning. A test of distinguishing differences and noting similarities between objects not present to the sense was included by Binet and Simon in their 1905 edition of the scale for the measurement of intelligence. In the Stanford Revision of the Binet Simon scale, in addition to the test of distinguishing differences and noting similarities, Terman includes a list of one hundred words prepared from Laird and Lee's 1904 vest-pocket edition of WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY. This list of words is given as an individual test in which the child gives the meaning or definition of a word. It is possible for the examiner to question the subject until he is sure that the child either knows or does not know the meaning of a word. In this respect it is like the typical class room procedure. The scoring of this test is subjective and the results are somewhat dependent upon the training of the person giving the tests. However, Terman (8) shows that there is very general agreement between the different people scoring the test. Weeks gave the Terman list of words as a written group test instead of an oral individual test and concludes that a pupil's score will be slightly higher in the oral than in the written test.

The synonym test, as well as the definition test, is often used as a class room technique. The teacher asks the child to give another word which means the same or nearly the same as the stimulus word. The limitations of this type of test are similar to those listed above. The opposite test in which the sub-

ject gives a word opposite in meaning, has been widely used, particularly in the field of intelligence testing. Bonser (1), in a study of the reasoning ability of children in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades concludes that the opposite test is superior as a test of mental ability, but does not indicate the value it might have as a test of word meanings.

The matching test, while a popular type in many fields, has not been used extensively in standardized vocabulary and reading tests. Two examples of this type of exercise are the Detroit Word Recognition Test, and the Southington Plymouth English Vocabulary Test. Dolch (3) claims that the matching test is the most useful of all the forms of aided recall. Simms (7) shows that the matching test which he constructed possessed high validity as established by correlation with the composite of other forms of tests. The superiority of this test is maintained, because it minimizes the varying amount of suggestion, it is not necessarily restricted to doubtful synonyms, as phrases or longer definitions may be included, and it is easy to prepare.

The classification test presents a number of groups to which all of the words belong. The subject is required to indicate the group in which each word belongs. Two tests of this type are the Ingraham and Clark Diagnostic Reading Tests, and the Thorndike Scale for Word Knowledge of Visual Vocabulary. The classification test is seriously limited because all words cannot readily be tested by this method.

The multiple choice test in which the right meaning has been presented with several wrong meanings is one of the most widely used objective test exercises. The most common variation is that in which the subject underlines or chooses one of four or five numbered words which most nearly express the meaning of the stimulus word. Classic examples of this test are the Inglis Vocabulary Test and the Thorndike Test of Word Knowledge. In the construction of this test the incorrect answers are mixed with the correct

answers in a chance fashion. The incorrect answers are usually the author's subjective judgment of words which may be confusing to a child. Most of these tests have been built with little evidence to indicate that they furnish any difficulty for the subject. Weeks (10), in building the Plymouth Test of English Vocabulary, selected the alternate responses from a list of words which had been given as wrong answers to the same words in earlier experimentation. Kelley (4), in an experimental study shows that a test in which incorrect alternate responses were selected from children's responses when the words were first submitted as a recall test was slightly higher in validity than a test in which the incorrect alternate responses were arbitrarily chosen by the author.

The synonym-antonym test is an aided recall test in which the subject must recognize the word that means the opposite or the same as the stimulus word. The experimentation with the army Alpha test convinced the makers of tests that this device had value as a test of general intelligence and it has been frequently included in batteries of group tests. The most serious application of this technique as a measure of English ability was made at Johns Hopkins University and reported by Seago (6). A synonym-antonym test was given to college freshmen in English composition, and two months later modified so that a portion of the pairs was *neither* synonyms nor antonyms. This was an attempt to determine the effect of a *neither* response. The following theoretical considerations would make it seem plausible to include the *neither* category in order to improve the technique as a means of measuring vocabulary: first, the guessing or chance factor is greatly decreased; and second, a larger number of stimulus words for which good opposites cannot be secured may be included.

The completion test has been referred to as a test of "language ability" more often than any other single test. This test is a recall test aided by association, since the subject fills in the blanks with words which are suggested

by the context. The most extensive single contribution to the development of the completion test, since the time of Ebbinghaus, has been made by Trabue (9). He was interested in deriving a scale for the measurement of ability along certain lines closely related to language. The completion test has proved quite satisfactory as a measure of intelligence for its differentiates between groups of varying intelligence, but it has two serious limitations as a word meaning test. It is difficult to construct the exercises so that the blanks cannot be answered in various ways, and difficult to determine how much aid was secured from the context.

The analogies test, which is usually presented in the form: Color : Red :: Name : \_\_\_\_\_, has been used as a test of the language ability of the child as well as a test of intelligence. Inasmuch as success in the test is conditioned by an adequate understanding of the stimulus word, it may be considered as a word meaning test. Probably it should be considered as an index to the reasoning power of a child and a measure of his ability to perceive abstract verbal relationships rather than a test for word meanings.

In the multiple choice completion test, both recognition and association are combined to aid recall. The test, then, becomes objective, but some of the same uncertainties enumerated in both the multiple choice and the completion tests are still present. The Sentence Vocabulary Test, devised by Armstrong and Danielson, is a slightly modified form of this type. The stimulus word is used in a sentence, and followed by four words, one of which has the same meaning as the underlined stimulus word in the sentence.

In summary, there does not seem to be any one best technique for measuring word meaning knowledge. An appraisal of the studies using the various techniques would lead to the conclusion that with our present measuring

instruments there is little hope of accurately determining the extent or the quality of the vocabulary of an individual. Any marked success in measuring the word meaning knowledge of an individual pupil must involve either the distinct improvement of the measuring instruments now available, or the development of new and more accurate testing procedures.

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# Editorial

## A PLACE FOR ORAL READING

THERE can be no doubt that the great emphasis given silent reading during the past two decades has resulted in tremendously important advances in teaching. Interest in the development of silent reading came at a peculiarly favorable time for intensive study and research. Statistical science was in the right phase, and mechanical apparatus were available, as never before, for laboratory investigations. In consequence, investigators attained valuable results in an amazingly short time.

The worth of all this is beyond dispute. Unfortunately, however, not only was oral reading neglected during this time, but it was actually decried, particularly in the early arguments for more attention to silent reading. Many reforms derive their chief impulse from destructive criticism of supposed opposites, or closely related parallels. Certain types of leaders in social and educational movements go forward, by preference, on the mechanical principle of repulsion. The constructive force, in this instance, seemed to have gained a great deal of its initial impulse from the case against oral reading. Leadership was intense enough to arouse belligerent enthusiasm in the ranks. The old impulse, too, to kick the under dog, led to much specious argument in the case against oral reading.

It is not to be supposed, however, that no wasteful practices in oral reading might have been discovered. Many needed reforms might have been accomplished had the investigators worked constructively at problems in oral reading instead of eliminating the subject. The situation in oral reading fifteen or twenty years ago, was in some respects very much like that in silent reading today which needs critical attention. In her article, on page 83 of this issue, Miss Moore says that "as a

means of increasing speed and fluency in reading, many careful observers believe that entirely too much confidence has been placed in silent reading exercises. . . Such exercises very commonly involve the actual reading of not more than fifteen or twenty words in as many minutes."

It is to be regretted that, while the proponents of silent reading worked constructively at problems admittedly in need of solution, they strove, in many instances, for the abandonment of the entire program of oral reading. This was a questionable procedure. A more judicious course would have been to discard only those practices which had proved worthless, and to remedy defects. In any event, it should not have been necessary to establish reading reform by negative means.

Further encroachment of silent reading on oral reading in the elementary schools should be halted. The history of the situation, however, would indicate that there is positive work to be done in reinstating oral reading as a subject in elementary education. With so much that is proving unstable and worthless in life today, with so many objectives formerly advocated as indispensable in the scheme of industrial life failing on actual test, it is high time that educators scrutinize all school curricula. The old arguments that certain things be taught children because they are accepted in adult life must be supported by attempts to determine solid values in adult life toward which education may build. It is quite possible, then, that the discovery will be made that some of the very subjects should be restored which were discarded because objective evidence formerly was lacking that they functioned in adult life. One might postulate reading aloud as a beneficent influence in adult life, capable of making domestic life more sane and companionable.

(Continued from page 88)

of reading material, and are diagnostic only to a limited degree. Therefore, the remedial measures to be undertaken following the testing cannot be clearly and effectively formulated.

Time or space does not permit referring to more than three tests that are of value in aiding the teacher in planning her remedial instruction in reading. Gates has constructed tests of four types which he considered "served most adequately, within the limits of practicability, the purpose sought, namely, to secure by objective measures a diagnostic picture of the most significant features of a pupil's reading ability."<sup>11</sup> These four types are: A. Reading to appreciate the general significance; B. Reading to predict the outcome of given events; C. Reading to understand precise direction; D. Reading to note details.

THE SANCREW WOODY READING TEST<sup>12</sup> is a notable attempt to measure specific skills in elementary reading. This test measures seven aspects of silent reading ability; viz., (1) word meaning; (2) rate; (3) fact material; (4) total meaning; (5) central thought; (6) following directions and (7) organization.

THE IOWA SILENT READING TEST<sup>13</sup> designed for grades seven to the first year of college, inclusive, is another attempt to construct a test measuring a number of silent reading skills. The comprehensiveness of this test is shown by the list below:

#### *Comprehension*

1. Paragraph meaning
  - a. Social Science
  - b. Literature
  - c. Science
2. Word Meaning; Subject matter vocabulary
  - a. Social Science
  - b. Science
  - c. Mathematics
  - d. English
3. Sentence Comprehension

<sup>11</sup> Gates, Arthur—THE IMPROVEMENT OF READING, pp. 181-183. Macmillan Company, New York City, 1929.

<sup>12</sup> World Book Company, Yonkers-on-Hudson, New York.

#### *Organization*

4. Sentence
5. Paragraph
  - a. Selection of central idea
  - b. Outlining
  - c. Organization of paragraph

#### *Location*

6. Ability to use the index
  - a. Use of the index
  - b. Selection of the key words
  - c. Alphabetizing

#### *Total Comprehension*

7. The Silent Reading Rate

Even though the three tests described have gone beyond the mere measurement of general comprehension, it is evident that tests have not yet been devised covering all of the specific silent reading skills and abilities that have been singled out and isolated. There are in addition, no doubt, many narrower skills which have not yet been isolated which undoubtedly play an important part in reading performance, and which will come in for consideration in the future by test builders.

The results of whatever testing is done, to be of value, must be used to guide the teacher in intelligently planning her teaching program. This requires first a classification or listing of the weaknesses revealed by testing. A study of the results of this procedure will suggest to the teacher the "time and place emphasis" which she must give to her teaching. She may organize her class into groups for the purpose of correcting common faults or she may provide individual pupils with the proper drill materials or personal assistance. Some material of the drill or remedial type is available in commercial form but the individual teacher still faces the responsibility of constructing much of her own material and the suggestions for the type of drill work to be prepared must come from the interpretation of results from diagnostic procedures.

<sup>13</sup> World Book Company, Yonkers-on-Hudson, New York.

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Comfort, Mildred Houghton. **PETER AND NANCY IN EUROPE.** Beckley-Cardy, 1932. 75c

Du Puy, William Atherton. **WONDERS OF THE PLANT WORLD.** Illustrated by Ethel G. Blossom and Helen Babbitt. D. C. Heath, 1931. 88c

Engleman, F. E. and Salmon, Julia. **AIRWAYS.** D. C. Heath, 1931. 80c

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Crew, Helen Coale. **LAUGHING LAD.** A Story of Modern France. Illustrated by W. M. Berger. Century, 1927, 1931. \$1.75

Dalglish, Alice. **THE BLUE TEAPOT.** Sandy Cove Stories. Illustrated by Hildegard Woodward. Macmillan, 1931. \$2.00

Field, Rachel. **THE YELLOW SHOP.** Illustrated by the author. Doubleday, Doran, 1931. 75c

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(Continued from page 98)

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McNeer, M. Y.—WAIF MAID; il. by Lynd Ward. Macmillan	Salten, Felix—BAMBI; il. by Kurt Wiese. Simon and Shuster
Melville, Herman—MOBY DICK; il. by Rockwell Kent. Random House	Sandburg, Carl—ABE LINCOLN GROWS UP; il. by James Daugherty. Harcourt, Brace
Peary, M. A.—LITTLE TOOKTOO; il. by Kurt Wiese. Wm. Morrow & Co.	Sewell, Helen—HEAD FOR HAPPY; il. by Sewell, Helen. Macmillan
Peary, M. A.—MUSKOX; il. by Kurt Wiese. Wm. Morrow & Co.	Sewell, Helen—ABC FOR EVERYDAY; il. by Sewell, Helen. Macmillan
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